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Students make French flags for Parisian high school

Tanner, Burns organize initiative to send flags to Helene Boucher students in Paris

By Charlie Davis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

After the terror attacks in Paris on Nov. 20, art teacher Tamera Burns and English teacher Gloria Tanner put together a school-wide art project to reach out to those affected.

Burns said she was inspired to make small French flags and eventually have students all around the high school do the same.

According to Burns, when she came into school on Monday, she saw a drawing of the Eiffel Tower that was displayed near the front office.

"[After seeing the drawing] I came up... and I made a couple flags. It was a way for me to think about and process what had happened," she said.

Burns said that the flag-making then made its way to students in her art classes (who had the idea to put messages on the flags) and then to the student body at-large.

Students in different classes made flags on Wed. Nov. 25,



CHARLIE DAVIS PHOTO

Students in Daniel Lundergan's AP Calculus class were only a few of the many students that constructed flags and wrote messages to be sent to the Helene Boucher School in Paris. The high school is only blocks away from the Bataclan club, where scores of people were killed by terrorists.

which will be sent to the Helene Boucher School in Paris.

Burns said the Boucher school was chosen after Tan-

ner reached out to the French Consulate in Boston and learned that the Boucher school is located mere blocks away from

the Bataclan Theater where some of the violence took place.

French teacher Erin Fortunato said the flag-making idea on the

whole is a kind gesture that will show the impacted French students that others feel their anguish.

"Picturing the kids that have to...walk by [the Bataclan] on a daily basis is very challenging. To be able to show that we, this random school from across the sea, are thinking of them and are willing to spend some time hand-making things for them is really sweet. I hope that it will be seen as just a sweet gesture," she said.

Fortunato said the students took the activity seriously and gave the flag-making the attention it deserved.

"There were kids that were stressed out and did not know what to write. It seemed to me that [the students] were taking it very seriously because they wanted to be sure they were being appropriate to the situation and showing enough emotion," Fortunato said.

Senior Jarrod Young, who made flags in his calculus class, said that the activity was meaningful.

"I actually thought mak
FRENCH FLAGS, page 4

Bell committee aims to finalize version of next year's schedule

By Amber Paré
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Members from each academic department formed a bell schedule committee and are working to decide upon a schedule for next year.

Principal Patricia Puglisi said

the goals of the committee were reducing student stress and broadening instructional strategies.

In order to have music staff shared between the middle school and high school, Pug-

lisi said a "power block" will be implemented. This will be when band and chorus classes occur and will function as free block for all other students and teachers.

Having a power block was a result of research the committee conducted by looking at schedules of other schools, Puglisi said.

According to Puglisi, a key feature of the schedule is having at least one block longer than an hour each day and having lunches apart from the middle school.

According to junior Zoe Brown, she, junior Avery Shaw, Puglisi, math department chair Dan Lundergan, art and anthropology teacher Caroline Epp, English teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon, and Spanish teacher Robbie Bilsbury went to North

Reading to observe how their school functions.

The most popular option for a schedule next year is an alternating two-day schedule with four 75-minute blocks per day and a power

block with lunch after the first three blocks, which is similar to North Reading's schedule, Brown said.

According to Brown, students
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The most popular option for next year is an alternating two-day schedule with four 75-minute blocks per day and a power block.

Teachers experience school from students' perspective

By Courtney Fraser
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

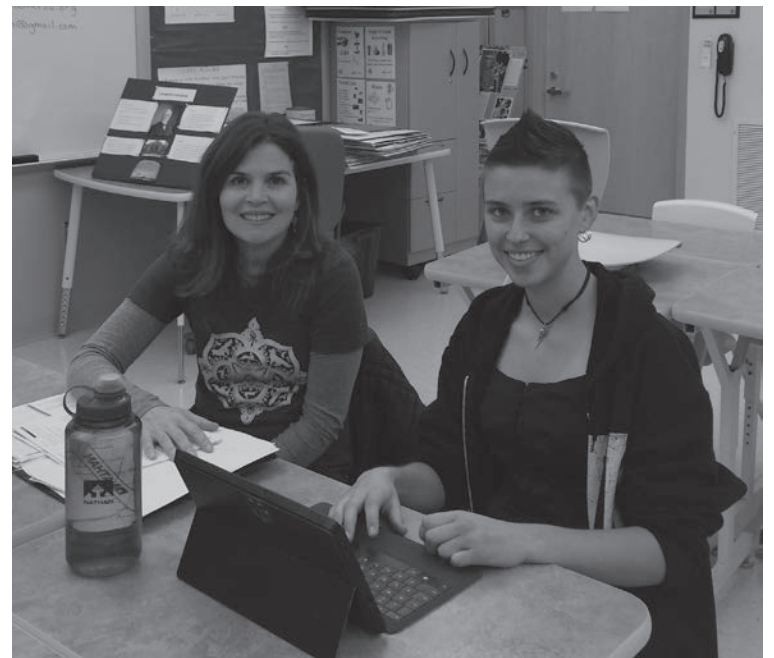
Four teachers from the English, social studies, and math departments volunteered to shadow four students before Thanksgiving break to experience life as a high school student.

During a faculty meeting in November, Principal Patricia Puglisi solicited volunteers for the shadowing experiment to better understand all aspects of the school day from a student's perspective in light of the schedule adjustments.

Participating teachers included history teacher Jessica Tran, math teacher Amanda Warren, and English teachers Gloria Tanner and Mary Buckley-Harmon.

The conversation of having teachers follow assigned students during the day arose from a discussion of homework, the wellbeing of the student body, and the new schedule.

On Nov. 16, Tran was given the opportunity to shadow junior Axel Fougere, who is enrolled in primarily college preparatory classes.



COURTESY PHOTO

English teacher Mary Buckley-Harmon shadowed junior Laney Franklin for a day. Two teachers found the schedule of the student they shadowed more tiring than their own typical day.

"I didn't feel as though these classes were terribly overburdened with homework, but I don't know if that's typical across the board. I thought about getting homework in six classes and how that will definitely add up to a good

chunk of homework," Tran said.

Tanner volunteered to shadow freshman Lydia Garret-Metz, who is enrolled in several honors courses, to discover what modifications the high school

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News Brief

Toy drive

The annual toy drive has taken place over the last few weeks.

This year, the National Honor Society has sponsored and organized a competition between classes that aims to increase the amount of toys donated.

The competition is between each individual high school grade, with the winning grade earning \$100 towards the total class funds.

According to NHS President Zack Even, the incentive is meant to capitalize on the competitive atmosphere that made Spirit Week so much fun this year. The idea behind the competition is to harness the competitive spirit of the student body to help kids in need.

NHS members were present each morning in the final week of the drive to tally the donors per grade and hand out candy canes.

The toys are donated to Pathways for Children, an organization that distributes the gifts to families that cannot afford to buy presents.

According to Assistant Principal Paul Murphy, Manchester-Essex is consistently one of the largest donors due to the generosity of the students and faculty.

This is the fifth consecutive year the school has held the toy drive, and it ended on December 18.



ZACK EVEN PHOTO

Robotics continues to excel at Savage Soccer Tournament

Team successfully competes with two robots at first competition

By Zack Even
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

For the third time in the last four years, the robotics team placed first in the Savage Soccer Robotics Tournament at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

"The kids put in a lot of effort, and I think that paid off... I'm very impressed with how enthusiastic the kids are and how hard they work," said first-year faculty adviser Daniel Lundergan.

Two different teams competed, one made up of veterans led by senior Ben Wolsieffer and another consisting of younger members led by sophomore Connor Coale, with the rookie team taking first and the more experienced team coming in fourth.

According to Coale, the separation allowed the rookies to develop their own ideas rather than simply following the lead of their more practiced teammates.

"It was to give them the experience of doing their ideas first instead of just going behind what the older members had done... and see the process of starting from nothing and building up to an actual robot," Coale said.

'We can come up with more ambitious designs and actually implement them.'

-BEN WOLSIEFFER



ROBOTSBYTHEC/FLICKR.COM

Robotics Team members prepare one of the team's two robots for the Savage Soccer Tournament.

The game at this tournament involved placing small foam cubes into three different goals, each with corresponding point values. One goal was raised 14 inches into the air, one was surrounded by a wall, and another simply lay on the ground.

The rounds start with 15 seconds for the robot to move around on its own, following pre-programmed instructions, followed by a two

minutes during which team members can direct their robot.

37 teams competed total. During qualification rounds, teams are randomly put into groups of three to compete in, but in elimination rounds teams must strategically choose the two other robots they ally with.

According to Coale, his team chose "defensive team members" who could protect their goals while their robot took the offensive.

Wolsieffer attributes some of the team's success to the fact that the robots needed for this game were smaller and cheaper than normal.

"These robots are fairly

easy to make, material-wise, so we can come up with more ambitious designs and actually implement them, unlike with the larger robots. They're 18 inches wide and 10 pounds max, and we can use cardboard instead of aluminum," he said.

During the offseason, the team plans to work toward developing other important skills.

"We're trying to... work on shooting a ball. We've never really made a robot that can shoot anything before, and that's... a common aspect of many of the games," Wolsieffer said.

The robotics team will have its next competition after December.

Seniors set to begin score projects, internships for fourth quarter

Students hand in proposals, set up internships, jobs that will prepare them for future career paths

By Charlie Davis
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

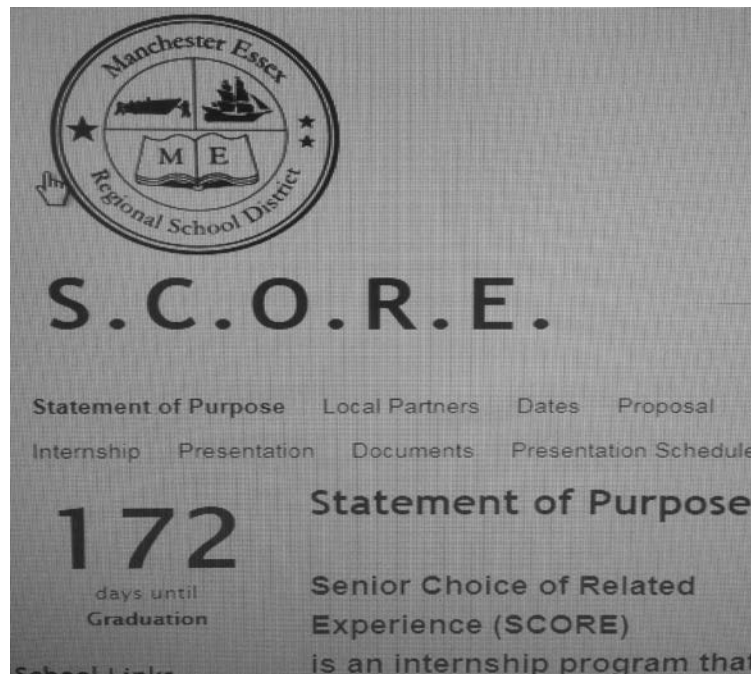
Seniors have aligned their internships and planned out their annual SCORE projects more responsibly than any past class in his memory, according to SCORE coordinator James Wallimann.

"This has been the most responsible class I have seen in my five years doing it and my three years of running it. No other class has had everything together like this one," he said.

SCORE projects entail an internship and a research paper to be completed during the fourth quarter.

Senior Jarrod Young said he will be teaching middle schoolers computer programming.

"I am really interested in computer programming, and I think that we should be able to teach it to middle school students so that more of them come into high school with a better understanding of what computer science is," he said.



CHARLIE DAVIS PHOTO

Seniors complete SCORE projects in lieu of fourth quarter classes. The project is used as a way to prepare for adult life.

Young also said he hopes these classes will peak interest in computer science earlier.

Senior Megan Clark said she will be interning with her uncle, a U.S. Marshal.

"I will be working on an unsolved case that has been attempted by over 20 different interns and U.S. Marshals...I will be given evidence and strategies to try to piece together parts of the case," Clark said.

Clark, who will be working with fellow senior Bella Mastendino on the project, said she is hoping to learn about what

it means to be an investigator.

"I chose my project because I wanted to learn about the in-

vestigative process and what my uncle does on a daily basis," she said.

Senior Erin Carlson said she will be doing her internship at a local animal shelter where she

has helped in the past.

"I'll be working at Cape

Ann Animal Aid testing the Big Black Dog Syndrome, which is the theory that black dogs stay longer at shelters and are harder to get adopted. I have been working [at Cape Ann Animal Aid] for three years," Carlson said.

Senior Chris Milne said he plans to work locally with the Manchester Fire Department.

"I will actually be able to work alongside the firefighters and on the engines," he said.

Milne said he is potentially interested in an engineering career, so his internship and project will prepare him for his later life.

Senior Emmett Strack, who said he is interested in the culinary arts, said he is planning to intern with an area chef.

"I'll be working at Short and Main in Gloucester, and I hope I'll be able to pick up some of the ins and outs of the restaurant business," Strack said.

Strack continued and said that he will also be able to cook and prepare some food.

Seniors will begin SCORE internships and projects in April after they are finished with non-AP classes. AP classes decrease the number of hours required per week for the projects by five hours.

'This has been the most responsible class ...in my ...three years of running it.'

-JAMES WALLIMANN

Cultural luncheon held to establish ELL program

English Language Learner program meal draws attention to room in library

By Avery Shaw
INDEPENDENT STAFF

To establish the English Language Learner program's presence in the school, the program held a luncheon providing foods of different cultures for the middle and high school staff, according to ELL teacher Jennifer Fitzgerald.

"We wanted to put the ELL program here on the map. It was a gesture to say that we are an established program. I'm not just somebody who comes in for only one block a day, which is what I did before.

I want to get the word out that room 240 in the library is the ELL classroom, so people know where to find me and where to find the kids," she said.

Fitzgerald said that the program has grown from where it started.

"I first came here because there were students who were new from another country and

they needed an ELL teacher. That first year I had two students in elementary and middle school, and the program has just grown and grown ever since. Now we have an ELL tutor for the elementary school itself. I teach middle and high school and we have six students here as well as six at the elementary. This room was the laminating room for a long time.

"We brought foods from the countries of the students we have here, both the current ELL learners and past ELL learners."

-JENNIFER FITZGERALD

It had a lot of shelving and stuff like that. So when our new students arrived and it became a small group instead of just one-to-one teaching,

I asked if some modifications could be made to the room. As those became accomplished, I decided we should have an open house," she said.

The foods at the luncheon properly represented the cultures present in the program, Fitzgerald said.

"We brought foods from the



AVERY SHAW PHOTO

Faculty members enjoy the luncheon hosted by ELL teacher Jennifer Fitzgerald. There were cultural dishes from the students' home countries including Brazil, El Salvador, Greece and Albania.

countries of the students enrolled in the program, both the current ELL learners and past ELL learners. I got coxinhas and empanadas from a Brazilian pasteleria in Somerville for our Brazilian students. We have a student from El Salvador, so we got pupusas from a pupuseria from a shop in East Boston. And I traveled around and got spanakopita for our Greek and Albanian students. Oh, and I had apple cider as a nod to the New England tradition. That was some-

thing from my culture," she said.

Guidance department director Beverly Low appreciated the presence of food from a different culture.

"I miss ethnic food. The food there was great, and it also was a great way to introduce the different cultures that we now have in our school," Low said.

Fitzgerald said she handled bringing in the food, so that she wouldn't burden her students.

"I provided the food. I decid-

ed that having a party the week of Thanksgiving and asking parents and families to provide for it wouldn't be very respectful of anyone in the time," she said.

Librarian Sue Krause said that Fitzgerald worked hard on the event so that it would be very successful and enjoyable for her students.

"She went to Boston and to Somerville to get the food. She really extended herself and went out of her way," Krause said.



MADDIE CONWAY PHOTO

Using their devices, students completed the online climate survey.

Climate survey collects data on school

By Maddie Conway
INDEPENDENT STAFF

In order to help the school administration better implement their improvement plan, according to Principal Patricia Puglisi, students took an online school climate survey during the advisory period on Dec. 3.

The survey is taken every two years, according to Puglisi, but the first time it was taken was on a voluntary basis, so "the data in the previous survey was not very strong because not everyone took it."

However, "it was a good baseline," she said.

This year, the survey's wording and questions were based off of the prior survey, but it

was reviewed and edited by the School Council, Puglisi said.

The survey included questions on substance use, bus stop safety, the amount of homework assigned to students, bullying, and general teacher habits.

"It provides us feedback on areas where we are doing things well and areas where we need to focus our attention for improvement," she said.

The improvement, she said, will come in the form of the school's improvement plan that was introduced at the start of the school year and focuses on the three themes of the general curriculum, the social-emotional health of students, and implementation of technology-based learning.

Among students, the gen-

eral consensus was that the survey was thorough and appropriately focused on real problems in the school.

"The survey was effective, and I liked how the survey focused on many aspects of a student's life," junior Jasmine Dort said.

Sophomore Rebecca Braimon agreed with the survey's thoroughness but doubts how much the information will be able to help the school.

"The survey was in-depth, and I liked how the school's mission was tied in, but some of the problems are out of the school's immediate control," she said.

According to Puglisi, the information will be reviewed at the next School Council meeting on Dec. 17.

April STEM trip plans to take students on tour of France, Germany

By James Riordan
INDEPENDENT STAFF

During April vacation the school is planning to take a group of students on an 8-day trip to Germany and France for an opportunity to sight-see and learn at the same time.

Other departments have run similar student trips in the past, but this is the first time that the school has organized a trip centered around the subjects of math and science.

Math teacher Kara Brown, the main organizer of the trip, said that she first got the idea when she was talking with a few of her friends outside of school. She

was complaining about how all of the other departments got to go on trips, and one of her friends replied that she worked for a travel organization that offered a STEM trip run by Explorica.

"After that I came back to school and said that we should do this. It is a great way to get kids more involved in math and science," Brown said.

Daniel Lundergan, the math department chair, was one of the people that Brown first presented the idea to, and he fully supported it.

"For students interested in math and science, it is a really great opportunity to immerse yourself in that for a week or

so while doing some sightseeing as well," Lundergan said.

A number of students have already said they are intrigued and would love to go.

"I want to learn about the different engineering aspects of Europe compared to what we do here in America," senior Eddie Beauregard said.

The trip will begin in Frankfurt, Germany, and end in Paris, France, with stops at landmarks such as the Solar Church, the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower, Versailles, and the Louvre. There will be many other activities such as a tour of the Smart Car factory, a math treasure hunt, and a City of Science and Industry visit.



MARKGGN/COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Students have the chance to tour Paris and Frankfurt on the trip.

The cost of roughly \$2,800 covers every aspect of the trip from food to lodging to travel. At least six students are needed for the trip to take place from

April 17 to April 25, and four have already signed up. The deadline for sign-ups is Jan. 3. Students interested in more information should contact Brown.

Algebra II students participate in catapult project

By Emily Clark
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Amanda Warren, the new Algebra II teacher, had her students participate in a catapult project in which they launched marshmallows to expand their knowledge of parabolas.

The honors classes started these projects the week of Nov. 9 and have since finished. The college prep classes will complete the project by Christmas.

The students in Warren's classes were learning about factoring, the quadratic formula, and how to graph parabolas. This project helped them to better visualize these concepts, Warren said.

The project challenged the students to build a catapult with their own design or by using a website Warren provided them. They then tried to make a quadratic formula

for the route of the catapulted marshmallow and use their data to hit the top of a castle.

According to sophomore Kevin Albertazzi, the project was an efficient way to teach the students more about parabolas.

"I think this project was a good way to give us a visual and actual interaction of parabolas. I think it was an effective and fun thing to do, and I want to do more things like this in the future because I feel

like I understand the information better," he said. Warren said that parabolas are a hard concept to grasp and opportunities to visualize them are very helpful to students. "Sometimes parabolas can

be really abstract if there are not real-world examples, but many students stated in their report that they can now see how parabolas apply to the real world," she said.

The arch the marshmallow made is an example of how parabolas appear in the real world.

Melanie Carter, a junior in Warren's Algebra II honors class, thought that the project was effective too. "We did a lot of work with parabolas, and it was cool to see

the whole project come together in the end. I would rather do more projects like this in the future than just have normal class," she said.

Albertazzi and Carter both hope to engage in more math projects like this in the future,

'I always love to pull hands-on activities into the classroom.'

-AMANDA WARREN



EMILY CLARK PHOTO

Sophomores Rebecca Braimon and Alexi Woodward had their catapult displayed in math teacher Amanda Warren's classroom.

and Warren said she is ready to implement more into the class. "Whenever I can, I will use

more projects like this. I always love to pull hands-on activities into the classroom," she said.

Math Team achieves early success, looks to keep improving performance

By Maura McCormick
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students on the Math Team won the first two meets of the season, an accomplishment that the team hasn't achieved in many years, according to math department head Dan Lundergan.

At the first meet on Oct. 1, the team scored 87 points, winning over Masconomet Regional High School by five points.

The team topped Masconomet Regional High School and Pingree by a single point at the second meet of the season on Nov. 5.

Lundergan said the meet was tied until the team round, when Manchester Essex scored six points, answering two of the six questions correctly.

"Winning the team round was a shock because usually the team round has the hardest prob-



AVERY SHAW PHOTO

Seniors Jarrod Young, Ben Wolsieffer, Nathan Evans, Zack Even, Ethan Andersen, Tyler Quade, junior Fritz Spofford, and sophomore Connor Coale collaborate during the team event.

lems. It takes a series of concepts and puts them in complex problems," junior Avery Shaw said.

Senior Nathan Evans said

the team round was more fun than individual rounds.

"The team round was fun because you could talk to other stu-

dents about problems. It's not as fun when you have to just power through questions by yourself," he said.

Shaw said that participation from students in every grade contributed to the team's success.

"We have great participation in each grade. In each subject we have students newly learning it, so it is fresh in their brains," she said.

Lundergan said the top scorers from Manchester Essex were seniors Jarrod Young and Zack Even, who each scored eight points.

He and Shaw said although no Manchester Essex students were the top scorers overall at the

meet, the team's consistency led them to victory.

"We don't have any singular star team member, but we have a steady amount of points that just add up," Shaw said.

Shaw said Lundergan has also been a big factor in the team's success

and that his practices have been integral in the team's ability to perform better in meets. "Mr. Lundergan is proud of you no matter how you do," she said.

'We have great participation in each grade. In each subject we have students newly learning [the material], so it is fresh in their brains.'

-DAN LUNDERGAN

CONTINUATIONS

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ing the flags was a good way to express all of our sympathy towards the Paris students. They went through something traumatic, so I think it was nice to show our support," he said.

SHADOWING continued from page 1

curriculum could make to manage the well-being of students.

"There is a lot of sitting, and I never realized how much students sat. I could see how it would be hard to do that for six hours straight without any movement," Tanner said.

According to Tanner, shadowing Garret-Metz encouraged her to brainstorm ways to have students moving in the classroom as opposed to staying seated for an hour.

Upon shadowing Fougere, Tran made similar observations throughout her school day re-

garding in-class movement.

"In my room, you are sitting for 55 minutes, and at the time it doesn't seem like a big deal, but when that happens for six periods all day long, it's different. It's extremely tiring," Tran said.

Math department teacher Warren shadowed junior Maya Palmer and made several observations concerning the academic schedule.

"I felt more tired at the end of that day than I do teaching all day long. Mentally switching gears so many times throughout the day and only having the time at lunch to relax isn't enough," Warren said.

BELL COMMITTEE continued from page 1

at North Reading believe the schedule reduced stress.

"I was hesitant at first... but seeing that so many students liked it changed my mind," she said.

Spanish teacher Robert Bilsbury said the schedule had positive aspects but presents issues to foreign language teachers.

"Daily exposure to a target

language... is extremely important. We would have to explore the use of technology and other ways to teach on days we do not have class," he said.

Biology teacher Maria Burgess, a member of the scheduling committee, said the implementation of at least one longer block each day is important to science classes.

"We are trying to implement inquiry-based learning rather than passive learning... It is extremely difficult to get a lab or an active experience completed in one class," she said.

Other options for the schedule are rotating seven-day, seven-block schedules where there are five blocks per day and a power block. One option for the seven-day schedule includes one long block each day, while the other option has all hour-long classes, Puglisi said.

The faculty will discuss options for the schedule at their December meeting, and a finalized version of the schedule will be completed in the spring.



CHARLIE DAVIS PHOTO

Senior Jarrod Young glues together a French flag to send to Parisian high schoolers who live near where the attacks occurred. Some students wrote messages onto the backs of finished flags.

Health Matters

'Sitting epidemic' negatively impacts health

By Maura McCormick
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Students and workers tend to spend most of the day sitting at a desk. This sedentary routine negatively impacts health.

Some researchers even go so far as to call this the "sitting epidemic" or equate its impacts on health to those of smoking.

Studies have found that sitting negatively impacts health, regardless of other exercise.

One meta-analysis by the Annals of Internal Medicine found that sitting has negative physical effects, regardless of how physically active a person is otherwise.

Some studies have even found sitting to be a cause for heart disease, the development of diabetes, and even cancer.

Thomas Yates, MD, told WebMD that based on his research "sitting for long stretches seems to be an independent risk factor for conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and kidney disease."

Another study led by Christine Friedenreich, an epidemiologist at Alberta Health Services Cancer Care found an association between sitting and the development of breast and colon cancer.

Standing desks are one solution that could help to combat the sedentary lifestyle.



MAURA MCCORMICK PHOTO

Beverly Low works at her standing desk in her office every day.

These desks are raised so that a person can work or study while standing up rather than sitting.

James Levine, an endocrinologist at the Mayo Clinic said he thinks standing is a better alternative to sitting for a person's health.

"The default has become to sit. We need the default to be standing," he said.

Guidance department director Beverly Low has had a standing desk for 10 years, and said she thinks it has helped her feel healthier.

"I don't feel the stress and tension in my shoulders anymore," she said.

There is limited evidence to prove that standing desks directly combat the issues associated with sitting, according

to Marc Hamilton, a professor of inactivity physiology at Pennington Biomedical Research Center. However, research is ongoing.

While scientists can't say for sure that standing desks are the solution, they do know that moving more throughout the day is a proven solution, although unfeasible for many students and workers.

People can incorporate more movement into daily life by walking while talking on the phone or taking short walk breaks after long periods of sitting, according to Mary Vinnedge, editor of Success Magazine.

Peer mentors address concerns in daily student life

By Avery Shaw
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Currently trying to reestablish its purpose as a group, the peer mentor program consists of 14 students who meet and discuss school culture issues, according to Beverly Low, the guidance department director.

"We talk about what the hot topics are. We go around the table, and students bring issues to us. We don't go in with a full agenda, but we usually have one topic that we concentrate on," she said.

Student members of the program inform the guidance department on social emotional concerns in student life, Low said.

"They give feedback on some things that kids are seeing out there. The honesty is so valuable. The peer mentors bring insight to us staff about what's really going on with students," she said.

Low said the focus of the group has evolved towards addressing students' well-being.

"Given the information we received from the Youth Risk Behavior survey and given the concerns about homework, there are a lot of things that the peer mentors could be instrumental with regarding social emotional issues, and that is where we are heading," she said.

"With such issues about stress that are so serious in our



AVERY SHAW PHOTO

Students give feedback to guidance on stress issues at the school.

school, it feels good to finally have our voices heard and see some change happen," said junior Nellie Boling, a member of the program.

The group is planning on creating a sheet that will be distributed on cafeteria tables with positive tips to boost morale, according to junior Melanie Carter.

"We thought encouraging messages with stress relief tips and sleep deprivation solutions might help lower stress," she said.

Key activities that the group handles are freshman fly up day, freshman orientation, and guiding new students through the school, according to Low.

"We will pair a peer mentor up with a student that comes in the middle of the school year, so that they have someone who will show them where there classes

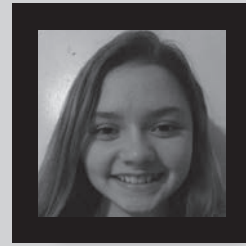
are, how to use their locker, how the lunches work, and just be a friendly face that they can talk with," she said.

Low is hoping to improve the outreach of the group.

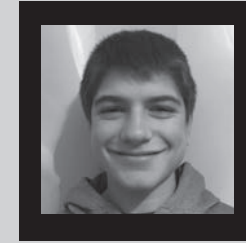
"The peer influence of one another is really strong, and I think having a group of peer mentors talk with other students rather than us standing and preaching all the time will make an impact," Low said.

Currently, the group is trying to establish a larger presence in the school and a clearer purpose of the group, according to Low.

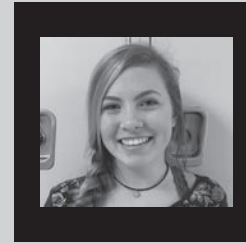
"We are in a state of transition. We are trying to come up with a more defined mission for the peer mentors. We are trying to get more students involved setting up info tables at lunch time and having people handed out applications," she said.



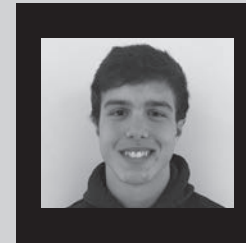
Freshman Annie Martin:
"An ugly vest"



Freshman Bob Beardsley:
"Barbie underwear from my aunt"



Sophomore Taylor Reader:
"When I was 7 or 8, I actually got coal in my stocking."



Sophomore Robbie Sarmanian:
"An ugly shirt"

Student Speak

What's the worst holiday present you've ever received?

Junior Liddy DeConto:
"Pink cheetah tights from my grandma"



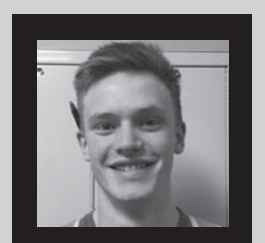
Junior Mac McCoy:
"Fuzzy socks"



Senior Molly Lynch:
"Socks"



Senior Quinn Dunbar:
"I got a guinea pig that bit a hole in my hand then ran away."





New reading service Spritz improves comprehension

By Will Heslop
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

In an effort to revolutionize the way that people read websites in an increasingly digital world, Spritz Inc. has released its integrated service aimed to help users improve reading speed and comprehension.

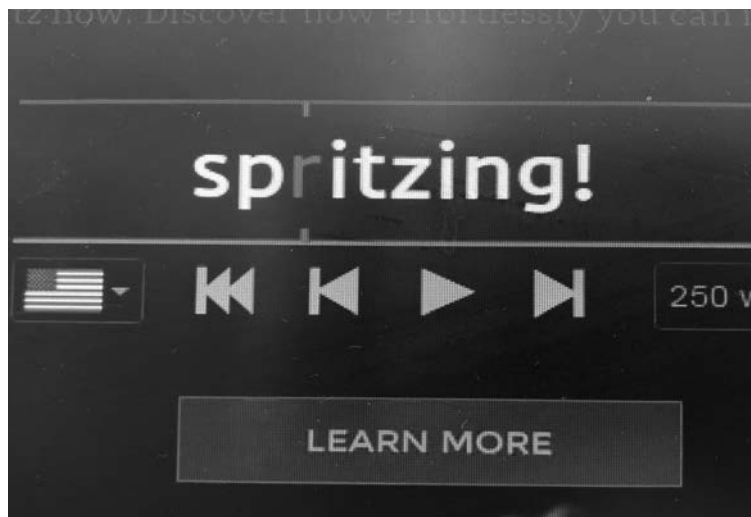
The company, founded in 2014, has developed a program that allows users to read content online more quickly. It is capable of selecting a portion of text or an entire article to be “spritzed.”

Spritzing is done by presenting the reader with each word individually, and it colors one of the letters in red. According to Spritz, highlighting this “Optimal Recognition Point” improves the brain’s ability to process the word being shown.

The company claims it has been working for over three years on developing an understanding of the science of how people read. They determined that people learn more

effectively when they are presented one word at a time as opposed to having to read an entire text. Just recently, the Spritz web program was released to the public.

Spritz’s primary use is as a browser bookmark, and it only requires that users highlight text



WILL HESLOP PHOTO

Spritz users can improve their comprehension of written materials and increase their speed using the new reading service.

that they wish to read. They can then select their desired reading speed, ranging from 40 to 1000 words per minute (wpm).

The website recommends starting around 250 wpm, but users can easily improve their speed far beyond this with enough practice.

Despite the speed of spritzing, “The retention levels when spritzing are at least as good as with traditional reading and that, with just a little bit of experience, [users] will retain even more than [they] did before,” the official Spritz FAQs said.

Spritz is a free service that can be downloaded within min-

utes. The company is also working on various licensing deals with other companies in order to expand the use of spritzing in other applications.

A number of applications are now being released on IOS/Android devices that allow users to utilize the spritzing service on mobile platforms. These apps include Boba, Quikipedia, and Rapid Reader. Some apps focus on full-length novels, yet others are aimed at improving the reading experience of news websites.

Spritz offers a very unique opportunity for consumers and educators alike. According to their website, Spritzing has the potential to help content producers reach a far larger audience while improving the experience for readers simultaneously.

Spritz offers a very unique opportunity for consumers and educators alike.

School plans summer trip to Cuba for 2017

By Abigail Fitzgibbon
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

History teacher John Mullady and Spanish teacher Maggie Sears are planning a school trip to Cuba that will place in June 2017 during summer break.

According to Mullady, the trip will take students and teacher chaperones including history teacher Lauren Dubois and others depending on the number of students enrolled.

Students will travel for eight days around Cuba’s capital, Havana, and the surrounding rural areas, Sears said.

The trip will be run by Education First, a company centered around worldwide educational immersion, according to its website.

“I’m hoping that kids who are interested in learning more about the culture will be attracted to the trip and that they will take advantage of being immersed in Spanish,” Sears said.

Education First advertises that students will take a Spanish lesson, spend a day on a farm, and meet with students at the University of Havana.

According to Dubois, “Education First does a great job of getting everybody to great places to see and immersing you in the culture.”

Sears and Mullady emphasize that the trip will teach students about the Spanish language and



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Students will travel for eight days around Cuba’s capital Havana.

the island’s history since it will be run through the foreign language and history departments.

Mullady says that he was inspired travel there because of the study abroad trip to Cuba he took in college in January 2003. Sears is interested in experiencing authentic Cuban food, music, and dance.

The trip would include the students traveling to paladares, restaurants run out of people’s homes serving homemade Cuban cuisine.

The Cuban government must approve the trip’s itinerary, but the U.S. Treasury Department no longer has to endorse the trip.

In mid-September, the U.S. Treasury announced travel sanctions on Cuba would be lifted to promote economic opportunities for both countries, allowing more Americans to travel there.

The lift of sanctions would mean that American compa-

nies would soon establish there, so Mullady is hoping the students will see the country before this happens.

“It would be a very unique moment in Cuban history before American businesses... establish franchises. So students would have an opportunity to see a moment in history that’s like a snapshot in time,” Mullady said.

Mullady estimates that the trip would cost \$3,000, but students could receive a small discount if they sign up before December 15. Sign ups would involve rolling enrollment, giving preference to upperclassmen.

At the informational meeting on December 10, Mullady highlighted the benefits for traveling with EF, including the round-trip flights, a full-time bilingual tour director, and an educational itinerary.

STUDENT PROFILE

Annika
Dahlin



By Lydia Parker
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Favorite holiday movie?
“Elf”

Dream job?
My dream job would be to fly blimps.

Favorite restaurant?
Depot Diner, because breakfast is the best meal.

Biggest fear?
Answering these kinds of questions

Favorite TV show?
“Parks and Recreation”

Biggest pet peeve?
When people throw away food that I wanted to eat but was too afraid to ask for

Favorite band?
The Neighbourhood

Dream vacation spot?
Venice, Italy

Favorite season and why?
Spring, because it rains a lot and all of the flowers bloom.

Favorite celebrity?
Jennifer Lawrence

Do you have any siblings?
I have one sister named Madeline. She is 19 years old, and she goes to the University of Pennsylvania.

Do you play a winter sport?
Gymnastics

How long have you been doing gymnastics?
I have been doing gymnastics for about 10 years.

What are your goals, personally and for the team, this year?
Numbers are down this year for our team, so our goals are focused on having lots of fun and supporting each other as we improve.

What are you most looking forward to this year?
I am most looking forward to getting to know the girls and boy on my team.

Brazilian students learn English, adapt to new school district



ABIGAIL FITZGIBBON PHOTO

New to the school district this year, sisters Heloisa, Luana, and Leila Vala left Brazil to live in Manchester. To overcome the language barrier, the students use iPads to talk with others.

By Abigail Fitzgibbon
INDEPENDENT STAFF

After three years of waiting for U.S. visas and a nine-hour plane flight, sisters Heloisa, Luana, and Leila Vala left Brazil to come to Manchester.

Originally born in São Paulo, Brazil, the sisters grew up in a town called Ortigueira in the state of Paraná near Paraguay.

The sisters traveled with their younger brother, seventh-grader Luiz, 12, and are now living with their sister Adriana, who is a nurse. Their parents live in Boston with their older brother Joao.

According to sophomore Luana, 16, the sisters were motivated to move to Manchester because of the schools and to be closer to their brother and sister living in the Boston area.

The sisters also moved to Manchester for the opportunity to go to a university, said junior Heloisa, 18, who wants to be-

come a film director.

According to freshman Leila, one of the one of the main differences between schools in Brazil and Manchester Essex is that teachers rotate classrooms in Brazil instead of students and there are about 30 students per class. Students in Brazil also spend about 5 hours in school and take a total of 11 courses, Luana said.

In Brazil, students take English starting in fifth grade because English is another common language of Brazil, she said.

According to freshman Leila, their first few weeks at Manchester Essex reminded them of listening to the adults in the "Peanuts" cartoons because they could not understand the English well.

English language learner

teacher Jen Fitzgerald encourages the students to understand and speak English and helps them adapt the environment at the school.

"They are very excited to be here and meet new people," Fitzgerald said.

The Spaulding Education Fund gives iPads to English language learners through a grant when they first come to the

school so that they can better communicate with their teachers and with other students.

According to Fitzgerald, the students have made good progress with learning English through instruction

and their use of the iPads since arriving here in mid-September.

"They are learning so much English so fast... They see their own progress, which gives them confidence," she said.

'They are very excited to be here and meet new people.'

-JEN FITZGERALD

Experts predict El Niño weather pattern for the upcoming season

New England awaits warmer temperatures for this year's winter

By Juliette Kelley
INDEPENDENT STAFF

After last year's record-breaking winter in New England, many people are wondering about weather predictions for the upcoming winter.

Experts have identified a weather pattern, El Niño, that is likely to occur this winter. According to meteorologist Doug Gillham from a web page on The Weather Network, El Niño has been known to bring mild winters to much of the United States.

Although El Niño does not guarantee a mild winter, "the two strongest El Niño events on record prior to this year (1982-83 and 1997-98) were quite mild," Gillham said.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, El Niño is the warming of the central and

eastern Pacific Ocean. This disrupts typical weather patterns by changing the temperature and direction of water currents.

Chemistry teacher Keith Gray said this winter will be "wetter because [the current] is going to pull Gulf moisture, and warmer because [the current] is coming from the Southwest."

According to Gillham, El Niño will cause above average precipitation from Southern Carolina to Florida and up the East coast all the way to Maine.

However, because El Niño causes warmer temperatures, this precipitation may come in the form of rain until the temperature pattern switches and becomes colder, which will likely happen near the end of winter, Gillham said.

Although New England is expected to have warmer weather, places eastward from Arizona and through Texas are likely to have cooler than average temperatures, according to The Weather Channel. These cooler temperatures may even reach Florida.

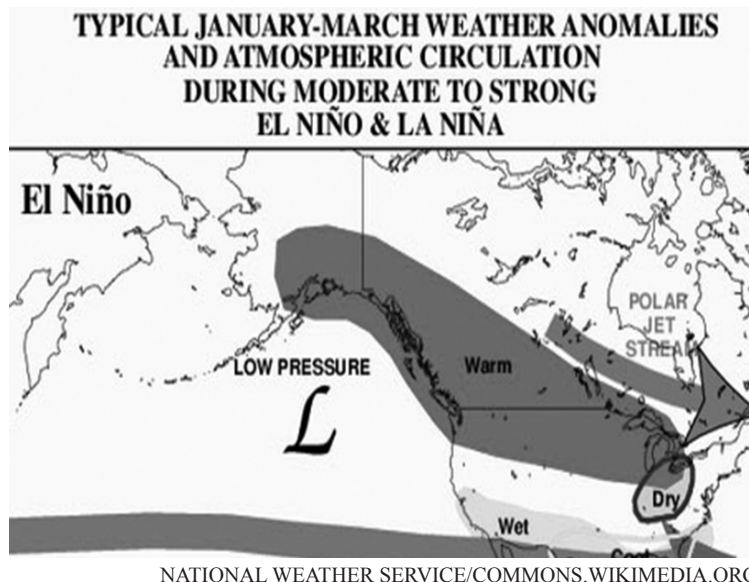
Also different than New England, the wet weather system

that will be heading east from Southern California is not likely to reach north of central California, which means that the Pacific Northwest will be experiencing a dryer winter, according to Gillham.

All of these predictions, however, are based on speculation or history. "Usually, long range forecasts are based on historical record...there's always fluctua-

'The two strongest El Niño events on record prior to this year were quite mild.'

-DOUG GILLHAM



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE/COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Weather experts have predicted a wetter and warmer for the upcoming winter season for people living in New England

tion," Gray said.

El Niño is affected by day-to-day variability in the weather pattern, climate change, and other factors, The Weather Channel said. Because of this, it can be very difficult to determine the exact nature of future weather.

However, according to Gray, the plume of heat in the Pacific that characterizes El Niño is almost unprecedented, so this winter is likely to follow the general historical pattern that has occurred during El Niño winters.

Yearbook Club seeks visual cohesion, even coverage under new adviser

By Fritz Spofford
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Art and anthropology teacher Caroline Epp has recently taken the helm of the yearbook club, seeking to bring some artistic innovations to how the book is crafted.

"Having an art background, the importance to me is to make sure it has visual unity but also visual variety," Epp said.

"She's the first yearbook adviser in my four years here who is actually in the art department. Being the photo teacher and having done MEMO gives her a professional opinion and really good insight into what makes a page look good," yearbook co-editor Hannah White said.

"The editors have chosen a template and color scheme to use throughout the book, because we really want the book to be visually cohesive," Epp said. "We've really been into being organized first."

One of Epp's strong suits is the freedom she gives to members, said White.

"She does just the right amount," White said. "She'll be constantly throwing ideas to [Phoebe Schwartz and Maddy Surette, the yearbook's two other co-editors] and I, but she really

puts the ball in our court when it comes to making decisions."

The club is seeking to gain variety in the people shown in the book as well, said Epp.

'Any kid who wants pictures... in the yearbook can use the ReplayIt app.'

-CAROLINE EPP

"It's very important to me that the yearbook is not just the same 20 people over and over again... I really want to make sure that everybody appears in the yearbook

multiple times, from freshmen all the way to seniors, from people who play field hockey to people who do robotics to people who do debate," she said.



FRITZ SPOFFORD PHOTO

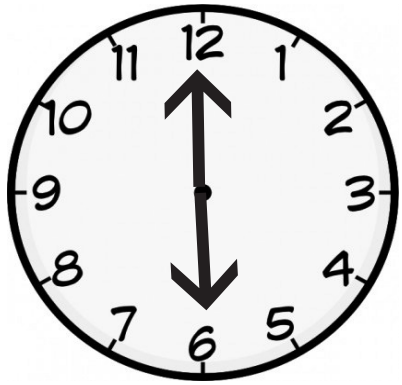
Yearbook adviser Caroline Epp holds several weekly meetings in her room teaching students how to format pages in the yearbook.

To accomplish this, Epp is encouraging students to submit more photos of themselves for the book.

"Any kid who wants pictures of themselves and their friends in the yearbook can use the ReplayIt app. If they take

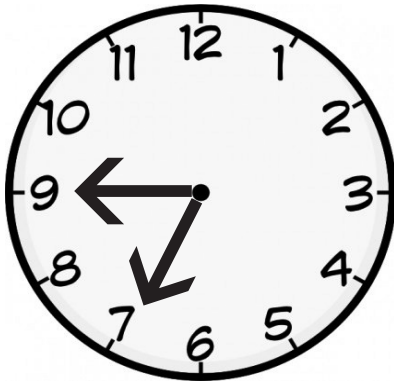
pictures and upload them [to the app], then we can have access to them to put in the yearbook," Epp said.

Upon downloading the app in the App Store, students can select their school, make an account, and upload photos.



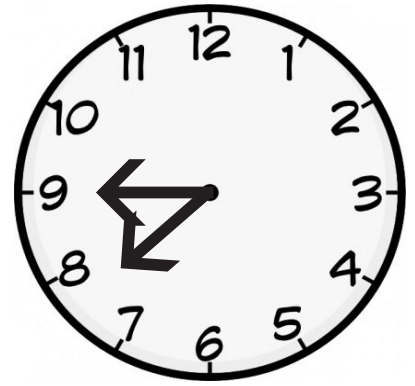
6 a.m.

After waking up in the morning, Lumsden checks her computer if any teachers have called-in sick. By 6:15, she has subs lined up and has contacted teachers for sub plans.



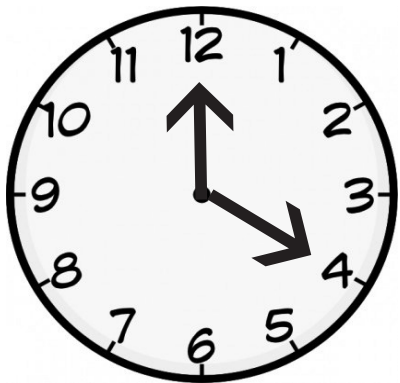
6:45 a.m.

Lumsden begins her day at school by reading messages, answering the phone (if she has time), and receiving calls from parents about their absent children.



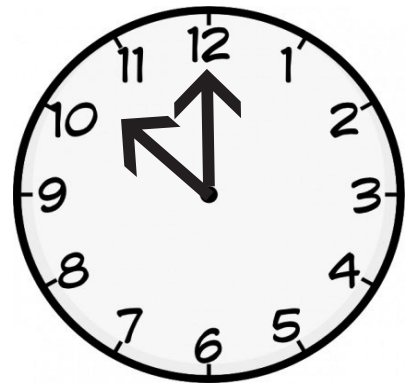
7:45-8:45 a.m.

Lumsden says the start of school is one of the craziest times of the day. In between handing out late passes until around 9:30, she puts the attendance in the computer and makes sure all students are accounted for.



4 p.m.

Lumsden said she leaves the school to go home at this time, but her job never really ends.



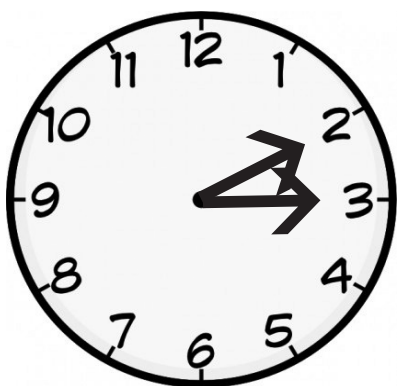
10-10:30 a.m.

In this time, Lumsden sorts the interoffice mail as it arrives.



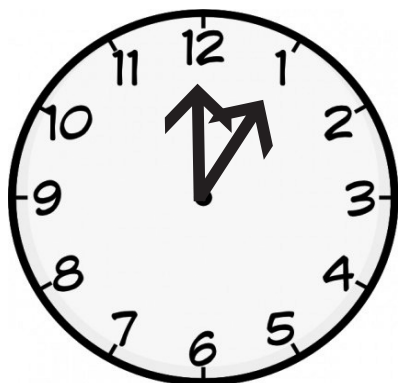
CHARLOTTE FREED PHOTO

"No two days are ever alike," Lumsden said. She said her days are extremely busy, but "[she and her coworkers] all try to work together and help each other... [they] are one big, happy family."



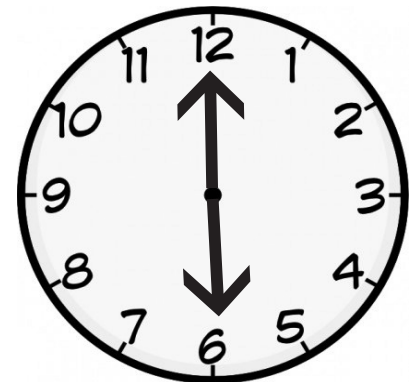
2:15 p.m.

"This is another time it gets crazy," Lumsden said. Lumsden helps Muffin Driscoll, the athletic department's administrative assistant, organize students' athletic forms and tell many students where and when their practices are.



1-2:15 p.m.

Lumsden looks ahead to the following days to prepare for any absent teachers and their subs and also finalizes reimbursement checks for various groups in the school who spend money, such as Green Team.



12:30 p.m.

Lumsden eats lunch at her desk. After eating, she addresses student activities, such as class advisers or debate, and their finances, which includes writing checks. From 7 a.m. until 12 p.m., Lumsden said she has constant interruptions from other issues. Lumsden helps Assistant Principal and Athletic Director Paul Murphy with his work and discipline for students.

Safety v. Convenience

Should the school open the side doors for students?

Pro

Fritz Spofford

Student safety was the key motivation behind locking the doors adjacent to the student parking lot, and while that is an important concern, the doors' convenient location prompts the need for compromise.

In wake of the various instances of school violence that occurred in 2012 (including the incidents at Sandy Hook), school administration felt a need to demonstrate a more detailed sense of security throughout the building.

"If we were negligent in terms of providing a safe space for kids, then certainly we are putting ourselves in a position to have legal action taken against us. Our number one goal at all times is always the safety of our kids," Principal Patricia Puglisi said.

One of the measures taken was the decision to permanently lock the side doors adjacent to the student parking lot. They are inaccessible from the outside, and anyone who tries to open them from the inside is met with a shrill alarm, as well as thorough punishment from school administration.

"It's very common not only in schools but in the workplace for people to have to enter one main door to maintain the safety and security of the building," Puglisi said.

For students who park a mere 40 feet from them, the doors' convenient location is tempting, especially in the cold winter mornings that are so typical here.

Maintaining one sole entrance to the school may be common, but the heavy traffic flow surrounding the school each morning combined with the unpleasant weather conditions of the coming winter suggests a need for compromise.

The doors to not need to, and should not, be opened permanently, due to the jeopardy it places the safety of the students in. However, perhaps the door to the high school wing could be opened from 7 to 7:40 a.m., with a faculty member standing just inside, letting in students. Though student safety is the top priority, perhaps there is room for compromise.



ETHAN ANDERSEN ILLUSTRATION

Con

Julia Bonaccorso

As much as students, including myself, would be thrilled at the convenience of being able to use the side doors again, when safety is at stake, the school simply cannot afford to take that risk.

Living in the unpredictable world that we do, we default to using defense mechanisms to avoid feelings of vulnerability and mortality.

We constantly tell ourselves that "it could never happen to us" because we're "good people" or because we live in a dinky little town largely unknown to the rest of the world, but this unrealistic optimism is just that: unrealistic.

Unfortunately, no matter how many elderly citizens we help cross the street or pieces of trash we pick up off the sidewalk, in reality we are equally at risk of tragedy as everyone else.

That being said, we have to take appropriate safety precautions like locking the side doors and having visitors sign in at the office to protect against harmful individuals entering the school building.

Keeping students safe was the reason behind the initial decision to close the doors, according to Principal Patricia Puglisi, and in order for this to continue, the policy on the doors must stay the same.

There is no argument in the fact that the school needs to value students' safety over convenience.

Of course on those freezing winter mornings when the bell is about to ring, it would be infinitely easier to be able to slip through the side doors and into class rather than having to slide down the icy ramp to the front doors; it would save me quite a few late passes.

However, if students were to leave for school just a few minutes earlier, tardiness would no longer be an issue, and having to make that short walk to from the parking lot to the front doors is well worth knowing I am completely safe in the building where I spend a significant portion of my day.

Parents, I'm sure, share the same perspective on their children's safety.

When sending their child to school, I assume parents would want to be guaranteed that their child is protected from danger.

Without that peace of mind, any rational parent would hesitate to send his or her child to school thus damaging the school's attendance and reputation.

Furthermore, if the school was "negligent in terms of providing a safe space for kids, then certainly [the school] would be putting [itself] in a position to have legal action taken against [it]," Puglisi said.

Not only is students' safety at risk if the side doors are reopened, the school would also face serious legal trouble if anything were to happen.

History department should offer an in-depth world religion course

Students currently lack a class that covers religion; despite its divisiveness, it needs to be addressed

By Will Heslop
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Never has there been an issue as divisive as religion. Despite its monumental impact on society, it is a topic that is not addressed enough in school.

In order for students to truly get a deep understanding of world affairs, there needs to be a new, comprehensive approach to teaching religion.

A large number of conflicts over the last few centuries can be traced back to religion.

Having a section or even a chapter of the curriculum devoted to the belief system of an entire group of people is not nearly enough. There should be a class over the course of the year that gives students the opportunity to study each of the major religions in-depth.

A large number of conflicts over the last few centuries can

be traced back to religion. It has played a major role in the Syrian Civil War, the conflict in Israel and Palestine, and even in wars as far back as the Crusades.

Religion is also a huge part of politics, and current issues

such as abortion and gun control are deeply tied to religious beliefs. It is essential for any student interested in government and politics to gain an understanding of this perspective.

Too often the media presents greatly biased views on religion, and students lack a way to learn about different religions objectively. Solely receiving information from the media prevents students from getting true depictions of different religions.

Despite the amount of religious discussion in the media, the history department lacks a



AIA FERNANDEZ/FLICKR.COM

The "Coexist" slogan represents numerous religions across the world existing together in peace.

full-year religious study course. This is not to say that it is never addressed in regular history courses, but there is a lack of a course that tackles the issue head-on.

With all of the history courses that the school offers, it is understandable that there might not be room in the sched-

ule for a world religion class. This class should not completely replace other classes like debate, global issues, and psychology, as these classes are also extremely beneficial for students.

The department could take the same approach as the science department, and there could be a system of rotation every other

year in order to include this class as an option.

This would ensure that students would at least have the opportunity to take the course at some point in their high school careers, and there would hopefully be a large number of students interested in a class as impactful as world religion.



Prisoners' voting creates benefits, allows political participation

By Connor Senay
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

"Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting," Franklin D. Roosevelt once said.

Roosevelt may have been dismissive of the fact that many people who wish to vote, like previous felons, are ineligible; unfortunately, this dismissal of the prisoner's vote is common in America today.

Today, voter turnout is about 58 percent, and according to The Sentencing Project, a national non-profit 501(c) that advocates for alternatives to incarceration, "an estimated 5.9 million Americans are denied the right to vote because of a felony conviction, a number equivalent to 2.5% of the U.S. voting-age population."

Not all prisoners are compelled to vote, but based on the given statistic, a significant portion of the population is denied even after rehabilitation.

According to the Guardian, "Many people think prison should be about rehabilitation; a place to create opportunities for healing and personal transformation otherwise absent in the often highly dysfunctional and damaged lives of many prisoners."

As prisoners enter facilities to learn from their mistakes, the sentences they serve gives them time to realize how to adjust their lifestyles as well as participate in society in a positive way.

Additionally, the Guardian reports, "A prisoner's rehabilitation as a safe, responsible and productive member of society must include...the right to choose who governs us. To remove this right dehumanizes prisoners."

NewsMax, a news website that claims itself as "Independent. American," gives reasons why ex-felons should not vote, such as demonstrating "irresponsibility in their character by committing a crime" and "those who commit serious crimes have not shown trustworthiness."

These reasons fail to consider the process of rehabilitation that serving a prison sentence provides. It allows felons to understand the incorrect nature of their crimes and reenter society ready to participate in political affairs.

Allowing prisoners to vote is just and also allows a significant portion of the population to voice their opinion through politics.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Students need to focus on serving larger community

While community service is an ideal that should be a part of high school and the development of teenagers, it is important to ensure that the activities truly serve the community.

Even though there is a requirement that needs to be met for community service, it should not be seen as a burden that should be dealt with as quickly and easily as possible, but this is the attitude of many students.

Although students in the high school often have legitimate forms of service, there are some instances in which students are given credit for activities that do not actually help the community at large.

School-centered service is the most common type of service in the school and can be beneficial to the administration, teachers, and school organizations, but it does not meet the true or optimal purpose of community service.



KRISTEN WOODMAN PHOTO

Students participated in outside community service by dressing up as holiday characters and greeting children at the Essex Holiday Festival.

It would be unrealistic to require students to fulfill all of their service hours outside of the school, but there should be emphasis placed on helping larger communities and groups.

Encouraging students to perform outside service would

not only clearly help larger amounts of people outside of the school district, but it would also help students to become more informed and gain well-rounded worldviews.

Community service is meant to broaden students' perspectives

and engender helpful and industrious tendencies within students.

For example, volunteering at a local homeless shelter or serving meals at a soup kitchen are much more meaningful than manual labor completed right at the high school.

Additionally, particularly when students are the ones signing off on service forms, the number of hours on the community service sheet is often not representative of the amount of time actually spent working. A task that takes 15 minutes can quickly translate into an hour of community service.

Despite the sheet requiring that students clear their service activities with guidance before actually completing them, most students do the service without following this screening procedure. More oversight would remedy both of these issues that are present within the current community service system.

Home economics classes prove to be vital to development of life skills

Skill-based curriculum helps students, builds modern-day skills

By Amber Paré
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Because home economics classes teach beneficial life skills, they are a vital part of the high school experience for students and should be a part of all curriculums.

Home economics classes cover topics ranging from personal finance to cooking; these topics have real-world applications and are not typically a part of core classes.

Ruth Graham, contributor to the Boston Globe, writes that some historians think home economics classes have the power to play a large role in the obesity epidemic because the classes teach students about maintaining

healthy diets and cooking their own meals as opposed to buying processed foods.

These classes are also becoming increasingly important in a world where having knowledge of finance is necessary.

The skills that are taught are necessary to students even after they graduate.

According to the Council for Economic Education's 2011 Survey of the States, 75 percent of college students with credit cards were unaware of late fees. Additionally, a poll conducted by Sallie Mae, a company dealing with student loans, reports that 84 percent of high school students felt they needed more financial education.

Principal Patricia Puglisi said home economics classes disappeared in schools throughout the country in the '90s and early 2000s. This was because stan-

dardized tests like MCAS were being implemented, and there was more of a focus on core curriculums.

Even though schools think

it is beneficial to focus more on their core curriculums, students need a break from the rigid, sedentary nature of most academic classes.

Home economics classes would provide this break while still teaching vital skills.

For schools that do not want to create home economics classes or do not have enough money to hire new teachers, they could integrate skills learned in home economics classes into the curriculum of existing academic classes.

English classes, for example,

could teach students about writing business letters, and math classes could cover personal finance.

Puglisi said our school is taking

Students need a break from the rigid, sedentary nature of most academic classes.

steps towards having more skill-based classes in the curriculum.

"We'd like to see the development of courses that allow students to explore skill-based op-

portunities that home economics classes allow. All departments are looking to add new electives to next year's course of studies," she said.

Home economics classes allow students to reap benefits that can be used throughout their lives, making the classes an important aspect of a school's curriculum.

the INDEPENDENT

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The Independent is published monthly throughout the school year. It is a product of the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Journalism class. Editorial space is available to all MERHS students, faculty, and community members.

All submissions must be signed and put in the newspaper mailbox in the front office of MERHS.

The Independent reserves the right not to print letters and to edit the content for clarity and length. While letters can be critical of an individual's actions, they cannot slander or libel.

The staff editorial may be considered the opinion of the staff of The Independent.

By-line opinions are written by individual staff members and should not be considered representative of the entire staff.

The Independent staff hopes that all Manchester and Essex citizens will take advantage of this forum. The paper is meant to serve the school community, and we are open to suggestions to help it better serve its purposes.

US should ignore Islamophobia, welcome refugees

Background checks, interviews prevent terrorists from entering through immigration

By Zack Even
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

“If you bought a five-pound bag of peanuts and there were about 10 peanuts that were deadly poisonous, would you feed them to your kids?” Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee asked recently in an insensitive attempt to demonstrate the foolishness of letting in Syrian refugees.

While Huckabee may insist the answer is “no,” both within his out-of-touch hypothetical and the real life situation, his argument completely ignores the moral and logical arguments behind accepting the refugees.

Unlike the peanuts he mentions, these refugees are suffering and in need of a home. Unlike with the peanuts, the refugees are filtered through an incredibly intensive series of background checks, interviews, and more by both the UN and the U.S.

government. And unlike with the peanuts, we have no actual evidence that terrorists (or “poisonous peanuts,” as Huckabee so eloquently puts it) are attempting to enter the U.S. while disguised as refugees.

The process immigrants must undergo (particularly Syrian refugees, who have a few additional steps tacked on just to ensure American safety) makes entering the U.S. in that manner an impractical pathway for terrorists hoping to get within our borders.

American xenophobia has a bad legacy. Many columnists have already drawn comparisons to when the U.S. sent a ship of Jewish refugees back to Europe during World War II, a decision supported by roughly two-thirds of Americans at the time, according to a Gallup Poll.

By letting in thousands of refugees, we can recreate



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE/FLICKR.COM

Secretary of State John Kerry meets with Syrian refugees in Jordan at the Za'atri refugee camp.

positive moments in American history, such as when the country welcomed thousands of hopeful immigrants through Ellis Island.

Huckabee also claims these refugees who have “lived in the

desert their entire lives” cannot adapt “their culture, their language, their religion” to fit within the United States.

He fails to see the irony within his statement: the U.S.

is supposed to be a place where people can coexist regardless of where they come from or what they believe. Different cultures simply add to the flavor of the nation’s supposed melting pot.



INDEPENDENT ARCHIVE PHOTO

Poet Taylor Mali presents during the 2010 Humanities Week. Teachers and students can benefit from presentations such as this.

Humanities Week benefits students

By Juliette Kelley
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Humanities Week, a week where unique guests presented at the school, was discontinued, but it should be reinstated because it benefitted students.

Each day, there were many performances by all types of people, ranging from dancers to artists to producers. The performances were a different block every day, according to history teacher Jennifer Coleman.

This week was discontinued in 2010-11 school year. In the 2011-12 school year, there were performances about once a month. Since then, there has been no type of Humanities Week.

According to Coleman, it was discontinued because teachers found it difficult to plan classes and worried about missing class. The week was also a strain on money, according to Sue Krause, librarian and Humanities Week organizer.

However, the benefits of Humanities Week far outweigh

these concerns. It provided a break from the monotony of a student’s day.

According to Krause, there were about two presentations each day, which allowed students to move around. Activity is normally lacking in students’ days at school, so Humanities Week provided a chance for more motion.

Humanities exposed students to new experiences and ideas.

“Manchester-Essex is such a small school that we can’t offer a lot of classes that larger communities can...kids don’t get exposed to as much here as if they were in a larger community,” Krause said. According to her, Humanities Week provided a way for students to get experiences they normally wouldn’t be exposed to.

Coleman agreed. “It was

trying to expose students to more things to make them more well-rounded,” she said.

These experiences made the week fun and educational.

“I was learning new things as a teacher,” Coleman said. Krause also remembers learning from

performances such as that of the “unbelievable performance” of poet Taylor Mali.

Humanities Week offers opportunities for students and teachers. Principal Patricia Puglisi said she supports activities that extend student learning.

Sophomore Annalia Laino also thought Humanities would be a fun, new experience.

“I would love to have Humanities Week back!” she said.

Humanities Week was a beneficial experience for students and teachers that should definitely return to the school.

Humanities week provided a break from the monotony of a student’s day.

Grading on a curve negatively impacts students, inaccurately portrays skills

By Maddie Conway
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Grading “on a curve” inflates or deflates grades to give the average score of a C. Curving should not be practiced because is an inaccurate representation of a student’s ability and has the potential to create unnecessary stress.

When teachers scale grades, the scores fit a bell-curve graph. If assignments with an average score higher than a 75 are curved, very few people get an A. For example, if the average score on a test was an 85, then an 85 is a C instead of a 75. A student who scored a 95, nor-

mally an A, would now have a B or lower.

In the past, teachers have viewed curving grades on high-scoring assignments as an incentive to students because it encourages competition.

At the University of California Berkeley, psychology professor Marty Covington, who firmly believes that the root of students’ academic performance is their sense of self-worth, wrote in his book “Making the Grade” that the competition created by

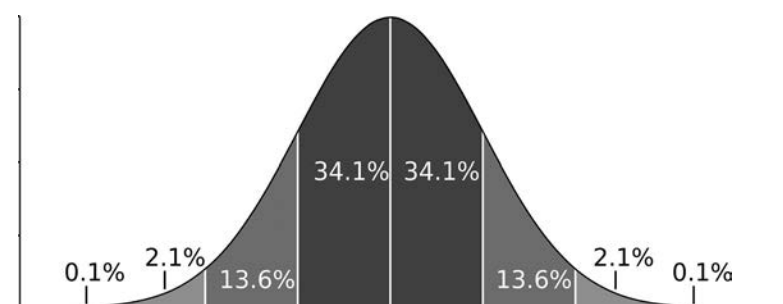
curving grades is hurtful.

“When conditions of scarcity [of A and B grades] prevail, failure is more likely to be interpreted [by students] as a matter of personal inadequacy. Failure created self-loathing,

especially in those students who were high in self-perceived ability,” Covington wrote.

He says students will only try hard if they are successful because “no one wants to

Students are much better off accepting a poor grade or completing test corrections if the teacher allows it.



MWTOEWS/COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Teachers who scale scores attempt to fit them to a bell-curve graph.

continue if the result is shame and self-recrimination,” so in the long term, curving backfires.

Curving also inaccurately portrays a student’s ability.

Unit test material will often show up on midterm or final exams that can’t be curved If

students don’t try to understand what their mistakes because they got an acceptable grade, they will be at a disadvantage.

Students are better off just accepting a poor grade or completing test corrections if the teacher allows it

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Lauren DuBois

Captains: Seniors Kara Hersey, Sydney Christopher, and Sabrina Pallazola

Record last year: 12-8

Record this year: 1-0

Goals: To make it to the finals of the state tournament

Impact players: Seniors Kara Hersey, Sydney Christopher, and Sabrina Pallazola

Coach's quote: "I want everyone to learn and improve and of course, have an enjoyable experience."

Captain's quote: "My goal is for us to work as a whole because we have small numbers this year with just varsity and junior varsity teams. I think that we need to work cohesively in order to achieve our goal of making it to the finals." -Senior Sabrina Pallazola.



Sydney Christopher



Kara Hersey



Sabrina Pallazola

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Coach: Bryan Shields

Captains: Seniors George Lantz, Alex Beckmann, and Jake Rich

Record last year: 13-9

Goals: to win the Cape Ann League and to have a successful run in the state tournament

Impact players: Seniors George Lantz, Alex Beckmann, and Jake Rich, and junior Jake Brugger

Coach's quote: "The seniors this year have really stepped up, and they are working hard early on... the three captains have set the tone for the upcoming season. They are our leaders, but all of the guys are working hard."

Captain's quote: "We are trying to be the hardest-working team in the Cape Ann League. We all have a lot of confidence in each other, which is helping with our team chemistry." -Senior Jake Rich



Alex Beckmann



George Lantz



Jake Rich

INDOOR TRACK

Coach: Mark Dawson and Nelson DeSilvestre

Captains: Seniors Charlie Davis, Chris Milne, Megan Clark, and Charlotte Freed

Boys' record last year: 6-3

Girls' record last year: 1-8

Goals: to win the Cape Ann League Baker division

Impact players: Seniors Nathan Evans, Chris Milne, Ethan Andersen, Megan Clark, and Arden Edgerton, and junior Lily Calandra.

Coach's quote: "I'm excited to build on the success of last season, especially with the addition of some new talent that will make a big impact." -Mark Dawson

Captain's quote: "We have a strong group of athletes returning from last year who will be able to excel at the state level." -Senior Charlie Davis



Charlie Davis



Chris Milne

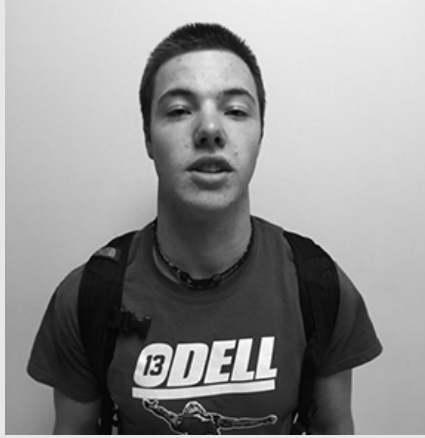


Megan Clark



Charlotte Freed

BOYS' HOCKEY



Anthony Lange



Jameson Kamm



Kyle Rollins

Coaches: Patrick McIntosh

Captains: Manchester-Essex senior Anthony Lange, Rockport junior Jameson Kamm, and Ipswich senior Kyle Rollins

Record last year: 5-12-1

Rivals: Gloucester, Shawsheen, and Northeast Tech

Goals: Winning the state championship, covering the defensive zone, entering the offensive zone, and using breakouts more often in games and practices

Impact players: Manchester-Essex senior Anthony Lange, Ipswich junior Christian Fabri, and Manchester-Essex sophomore Jackson Rice

Coach's quote: "I want us to change our team culture so that we know we can win and build team traditions off of that. We've built a positive environment around the team so far, and ethos is a core part of that. I think we have a group of really nice young players that we can develop and build a team around."

Captains' quotes: "Coach McIntosh was the assistant coach last year, so I'm looking forward to playing under him as head coach. My goal as well as the team's is to win the state championship, and we'll get there by increasing our speed and moving the puck more."

-Manchester-Essex senior Anthony Lange

"I'm excited to see how our new coach approaches our team and how we'll have to adjust to his coaching style as well as what kind of playing systems he has in store for us. Our goal is definitely to improve from last year because we had a rather difficult season."

-Ipswich senior Kyle Rollins

SKI TEAM

Coach: Tim Wonson

Captains: Senior Brad Graves and sophomore Emily Clark

Record last year: Girls': 1-5, Boys': 5-7

Goals: To come together as a team, to get outside, to enjoy skiing, and to ski fast

Impact players: Seniors Brad Graves and Aidan Burbridge, sophomores Emily Clark, Samantha Booma, and Katie Donnelly, and freshman Drew Charlton

Coach's quote: "Last year we had a good season, but there is still room to improve. We had some trouble with injury with some of our top skiers, and we were really young, especially on the girls' team. I'm excited to see what we can do with them on varsity in the league. And there are the same goals as every year at the beginning of the season: to come together as a team, get outside and enjoy it, and ski fast."

Captains' quotes: "Every year I look forward to this season, and now that I'm captain I am beyond excited. I make amazing connections with and learn so much from the other racers, and I can't wait to do that again this year. I always learn so much from the other athletes and our coach, and the cohesiveness of the team draws everyone together."

-Sophomore Emily Clark

"Everyone on the team is excited to get back on the snow and our goal is to ski fast." -Senior Brad Graves



Brad Graves



Emily Clark

SPORTS OPINION

Professional athletes' role model status means they must be held to higher standards



Since violent athletes like Frostee Rucker are role models for many children, the NFL must show that they won't tolerate abusive behavior.

By Oscar Heanue
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

For many of the nation's youth, role models don't necessarily come in the form of scientists, educators, and political leaders. For most kids, their primary sources of admiration are professional athletes, with ABC News reporting that 73 percent of children ranked famous athletes among the "most admired people in their lives."

In many cases, this can be a good thing. Athletes such as Washington Wizards point guard John Wall, who has been an advocate for cancer-fighting causes, or tennis legend Serena Williams, who speaks openly about

promoting positive body image, are perfect role models for the nation's youth.

The problem is, in many instances, this isn't the case. More often than many fans are aware, athletes are the perpetrators of violent crimes. While this should be a major issue, many leagues are quick to sweep such issues under the rug.

In the NFL alone, there are over a dozen players with histories of domestic violence. Arizona Cardinals defensive end Frostee Rucker, for example, served three years of parole and 750 hours of community service after conviction for spousal battery. Despite the legal punishment, the

NFL sentenced Rucker to just a one-game suspension, which was later appealed and overturned.

Cases like Rucker are far from uncommon. Seattle Seahawks defensive lineman Tony McDaniell was suspended just one game after being convicted of slamming his girlfriend's head against the ground in a paved parking lot. The NFL took no action against the Indianapolis Colts' Erik Walden after he was sentenced to community service for misdemeanor domestic violence.

It seems that in the absence of video documentation, such as in last year's highly-publicized Ray Rice incident, the NFL and other professional leagues do little to

punish athletes.

Despite the heinous crimes committed by these athletes, they are still allowed the privilege to play sports professionally.

These athletes, simply by virtue of representing their cities, serve as role models for America's youth. Leagues should not allow these violent criminals to continue to influence young people when they are so morally reprehensible off the field.

Professional leagues must be more strict and harsh on violent offenders. Playing sports professionally means serving as a role model, and only those who can handle that responsibility should be eligible.

‘Nathan for You’ utilizes reality TV medium in unique, comedic ways

By Zack Even
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Ever had a ridiculous entrepreneurial idea just crazy enough to work?

On “Nathan for You,” a Comedy Central show halfway through its third season, there’s a good chance you might see those exact plans implemented on actual small businesses.

The show’s host, comedian Nathan Fielder, plays an impossibly awkward yet incredibly confident character who, having graduated from “one of Canada’s top business schools with really good grades” according to the show’s introduction, visits real business owners with creative ways to help them.

Fielder’s interactions with the business owners, who are all unaware that the show is meant to be comedic, are always cringe-inducing and hilarious, whether he’s pitching his plan or simply attempting small talk.

The show is made up of the

awkward encounters that would be edited out on the normal reality TV show; a few episodes even include moments when Fielder clumsily prepares his guests for their coming discussion.

But his twistedly ingenious ideas, many of which exploit customers or miniscule legal loopholes, are the true highlights.

In one episode, Fielder attempts to help out an antique store by opening it 24 hours a day and offering free pizza in the hopes that drunken passerby will stumble into the shop, break merchandise, and then be forced to pay for the damages.

His plans often spin out of control dramatically, becoming far more complicated than necessary (and as a result, far funnier than expected).

Fielder’s idea to create a free workforce for a moving company by starting a furniture-lifting fitness craze grows more and more hilarious as he hires a random bodybuilder to promote it and a ghost writer to pen a feigned



COMEDYCENTRAL.COM PHOTO

In “Nathan for You,” Fielder’s “Dumb Starbucks” parody, made in attempt to piggy back off of the coffee brand’s notoriety, was misinterpreted by the media as an anti-corporate demonstration.

autobiography for the builder.

And, shockingly, some of his business strategies work quite well. The fitness movement, for example, received considerable local press and quickly filled Fielder’s inbox with people

wishing to try out the technique.

Other episodes have received even more attention without people realizing their connection to the show: a staged viral video of a heroic pig made to boost a petting zoo’s profile received

millions of YouTube hits, and Fielder’s attempt to piggyback off of an established brand with the parody coffee shop “Dumb Starbucks” made international news as a (misinterpreted) anti-corporate demonstration.

Soaring vocals and crashing pianos flood Adele’s record-breaking ‘25’



ADELE.COM PHOTO

Renowned British songstress Adele returned after four years with the long-awaited “25,” which boasts the singer’s typical powerhouse vocals along with a fresh production.

By Lydia Parker
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Adele’s first album since her vocal surgery and the birth of her son, “25” achieves record breaking success while still retaining the high quality expected by fans.

Breaking records on the Billboard 200 and earning \$3.38 million in its first week of sales, “25” solidifies Adele’s grip on the music industry, even after four years of silence.

According to Adele, while her previous album, “21,” was a breakup album, “25” is a makeup album. “I’m making up with myself. Making up for lost time. Making up for everything I ever did and never did,” she said.

The album opens with “Hello,” the smash hit that took fans by surprise when Adele released it as a single in late October. The slow, smoky crooning combined with an explosive belting chorus

perfectly showcases Adele’s powerful vocal range.

A master of the classic love song, Adele delivers ballad after ballad packed with emotionally charged lyrics.

Free of the often overdone and generic synth beats of other current pop albums, tracks like “All I Ask,” and “Remedy,” utilize only Adele’s clear vocals and simple piano backing, creating an organic and beautiful sound.

“Sweetest Devotion” delivers the classic soaring vocals that brought Adele fame combined with rhythmic drumming and guitar strumming, which makes for a refreshing sound for the singer.

An upbeat track, “Water Under the Bridge,” boasts a more electronic beat that pulsates behind Adele’s powerful voice

throughout the track’s entirety.

Also unusual for the singer is her venture into more classic pop sound with her track “Send My Love (To Your New Lover).” Adele’s trembling and climbing vocals combined with an upbeat, sugary chorus are new sounds for the singer but a welcome change for fans

A master of the classic love song, Adele delivers ballad after ballad.

who may feel that many of her songs are structured too similarly.

The dark and smoky vocals of “River Lea” combined with a deeply

rhythmic beat, entices listeners to clap their hands to the beat and sing along.

“25” and its immense success solidify Adele’s position in the music industry and leaves many listeners looking ahead to music award season.

‘Adam Ruins Everything’ comedically, effectively exposes flaws in society

By Amber Paré
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Adam Conover, best known for his work with the entertainment site College Humor, has seamlessly blended educational television and sketch comedy on his new show “Adam Ruins Everything.”

The 30-minute show, which airs on TruTV at 10 p.m. on Tuesdays, follows Conover as he works to demystify misconceptions in society, exploring topics ranging from personal hygiene to American democracy.

The show’s purpose is to inform everyday citizens about the world around them and provoke people to challenge their accepted beliefs.

What makes the show unique is how Conover presents information. He cites his sources on the screen and even brings experts such as college professors onto the show in order to add credibility to his claims.

Despite the interesting nature of topics that Conover ridicules, the show’s format is somewhat repetitive.

In each episode, Conover meets an unsuspecting, ignorant citizen who refuses to believe that his or her way of life is flawed. Conover then takes this person on a journey where they trace the history of the issue being discussed, ending each episode with Conover’s companion becoming enlightened.

This format, despite its re-

petitiveness, allows the show to have a different cast each week because Conover meets new people to teach in each episode.

The lack of a central cast allows the show to remain interesting and have special guest stars such as Oscar Nuñez (“The Office”), who portrayed a naïve business manager in an episode aimed to expose the flaws of American businesses.

“Adam Ruins Everything” is also able to cater to young adults’ needs with its fast pace and integration of sketch comedy.

Rather than just stating facts, Conover utilizes infographics, cartoons, songs, and actors portraying famous historical figures to communicate information in interesting ways.



TRUTV.COM PHOTO

Comedian Adam Conover uses the sketch comedy format as a vehicle for discussing important issues in “Adam Ruins Everything.”

The best part of “Adam Ruins Everything”? Conover doesn’t just point out societal flaws; he shows viewers how these problems can be solved.

The most effective way to fix these issues, as Conover points out, is to be educated about them, which is precisely what the show aims to do.

Chorus and band members represent school at Senior Districts

Districts participants to show musical ability at performance in early January

By Ethan Andersen
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Representing the music department, six students will participate in the Northeast Senior District band and chorus this January.

According to chorus director Donna O'Neil, this was an outstanding result compared to previous years.

"We had a phenomenal result. Six students were accepted to the Senior Districts and four of those six received scores high enough to be recommended for All State auditions in January; this was more than in any previous year," she said.

The students who qualified from the chorus are seniors Alex Buck, Joshua Ward, and Sarah Rhuda and junior Jenny Duff.

According to O'Neil, the chorus and band will rehearse

starting on Jan. 6 and perform following a rigorous practice schedule on Jan. 9. The practices last four hours and culminate into the festival concert on the last day.

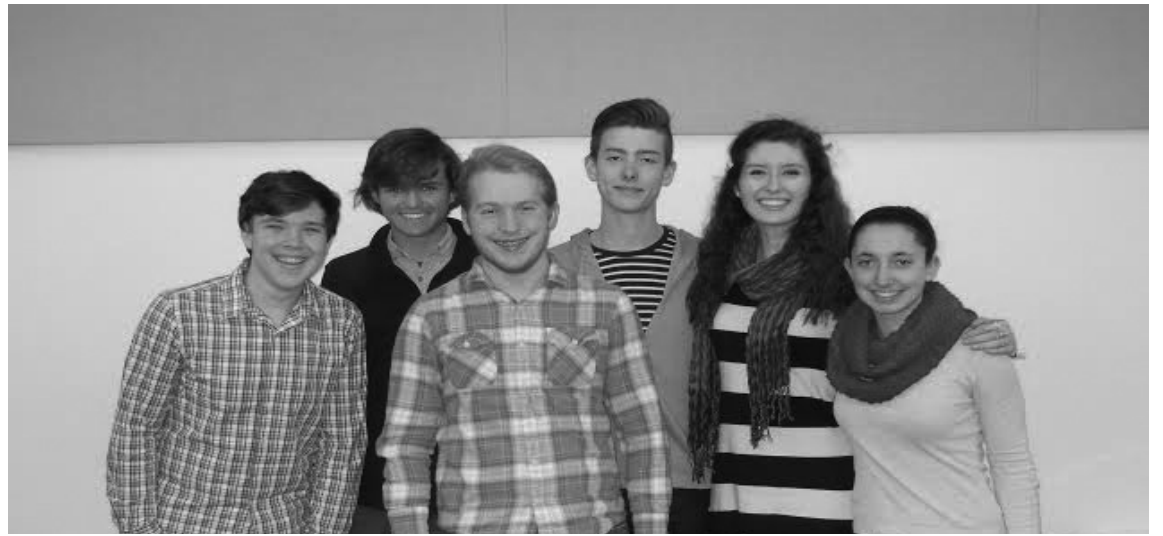
"They worked very hard on their sight reading techniques and obviously prepared very well," O'Neil said.

Buck explained that the process requires a lot of individual work.

"During the audition, we sight-sang and performed a piece we were given a month before. Luckily we had practiced it before, but we were expected to practice on our own and with instructors," he said.

The chorus members are then expected to practice a new piece on their own for the next two months before coming together to rehearse.

"It's a really cool experience.



COURTESY OF DONNA O'NEIL

Six students were selected for competition in this year's Senior Districts: sophomore Thomas Surrette, seniors Josh Ward, Alex Buck, Alexei Goldsmith, and Sara Rhuda, and junior Jenny Duff.

You get to meet students you wouldn't normally be able to and work under an awesome, high class director," Buck said.

From the band, senior Alexei Goldsmith and sophomore Thomas Surette both were selected to participate in the district ensemble.

As with the chorus members,

the two were expected to prepare an audition piece and then played it before an adjudicator.

"Fortunately, both our members who auditioned made the cut and received recommendation for the All State Band. The pair was identified as the third and fourth percussionists in the district," band director Joe

Janack said.

Janack was delighted with the percussionists' performances and believes their hard work paid off.

"It shows their professionalism and drives to do better. They studied privately, but I also helped them a bit in class and gave them some advice," he said.

Drama Club to perform 'Flower Girl' for annual Dramafest competition



SARAH WILLIAMS PHOTO

Drama Club cast and crew members gather around student director Chelsea Rose for instruction. The club is preparing to perform 'Flower Girl' for the annual Dramafest competition.

By Sarah Williams
INDEPENDENT STAFF

Drama Club will be performing the play "Flower Girl" this year, a rendition of the play "Pygmalion" by George Bernard Shaw, which is also the base story of the musical "My Fair Lady."

For Dramafest, run by the Massachusetts Theater Guild, Chelsea Rose, the student director, and Erin Fortunato, the adviser, cut down the play extensively to meet the 40-minute requirement.

"It was really hard to cut it [the show] down to 40 minutes, so seeing how we are going to pull that off is something I look forward to," Fortunato said.

The story follows a girl named Eliza Doolittle, played by Maddie Shaw, who has a cockney accent and sells flowers on the street. One day she meets Henry Higgins, played by AJ

Rhuda, who decides to fix her accent and make her proper on a bet with his friend Colonel Pickering, played by Alex Buck.

As the show continues, questions arise of what will happen to Doolittle at the end of the experiment.

Olivia Tyler, the student assistant director, said, "It's in the

Victorian era which means we can make a very cool set, although it may be a bit challenging."

The show is on February 27 in the Manchester Essex auditorium, as the school will be hosting the preliminary rounds of Dramafest. The other dates are not available yet.

This year Rose taking on the role of student director, which has not happened in a while.

"This is a new experience for me, even though I assisted Ms. Edgerton last year. Actually directing by my self is a scary but exciting experience," Rose said.

'Actually directing by myself is a scary but exciting experience.'

-CHELSEA ROSE

Having a new student director will mean more contest rules for the play in Dramafest and will give Rose the ability to win a student director award.

Before the drama club moves forward they will have to work on "memorizing lines and blocking and creating the set," Tyler said.

"A challenge is overcoming illnesses. Due to the season, kids are constantly getting sick, and it is hard to run rehearsals without people. Luckily, we have an extremely hardworking and dedicated cast," Rose said.

WINTER FASHION

Oversized jackets are all the rage this year. Seen all over New York City and worn by numerous celebrities, neutral colored coats are a definite go to. Plus, they have the added benefit of being warm.

Zara, Coat with Faux Fur Hood, \$129



Stylish shoe options are abundant this winter, as variety in shoes on the market allow wearers to choose their own style, from classic to sporty.

Adidas, Original Superstar Sneaker, \$80



Along with neutral-colored jackets, tan and cream-colored knee-high boots have been one of winter's hottest trends. The stylish footwear has been seen on fashion icons such as Gigi Hadid and Kendall Jenner.

DSW, Journee Collection Mount Wide Calf Over the Knee Boot, \$69.95

‘Master of None’ challenges sitcom conventions

Ansari’s reinventive style of the standard network-sitcom formula depicts life in New York City in quirky, realistic way

By Oscar Heanue
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Being a moderately successful comedian today means TV appearances, Netflix stand-up specials, and book deals. Reaching Aziz Ansari’s level means getting your own show.

The “Parks and Recreation” star received massive critical acclaim for his Netflix special “Buried Alive,” and his past experience partnering with the streaming service made him a natural candidate for his own original series.

In his new show “Master of None,” Ansari deviates from the standard network-sitcom formula, creating an independently-standing story in each of the show’s 10 episodes.

In the show, Ansari stars as Dev, a commercial actor living in New York. In portraying Dev, Ansari creates a unique yet realistic world – introducing viewers to friends, family, and romantic partners without focusing too

heavily on a single of characters.

Instead, “Master of None” takes Dev on a series of singular adventures, ranging from finding a date for a concert to making a citizen’s arrest on the subway.

Over the course of the show, Ansari works in numerous guest stars and cameo appearances, ranging from comedian H. Jon Benjamin (“Bob’s Burgers,” “Archer”) appearing as a bit movie actor to British action star Colin Salmon, who plays an eccentric caricature of himself. The presence of numerous well-known guests helps keep the show fresh and exciting while offering hilarious background characters to fill the show

with humorous subplots. The show’s more amateur actors still excite, however. The impeccably-cast show features a diverse array of actors, spanning from the giant Eric Wareheim as Dev’s timid, empty-headed best friend Arnold to the use of Ansari’s actual parents as Dev’s parents in the show.

While the show touches on



MASTEROFNONE.COM

Comedian Aziz Ansari stars in his own original series as Dev, a commercial actor who undergoes a series of singular adventures living in New York.

topics from “Sherlock” to finding the perfect taco, the bulk of the show’s action ends up focusing on Dev’s and his girlfriend Rachel. Several episodes simply focus on the highs and lows of the couple’s relationship, including an eventful trip to Nashville and the struggles of moving in together.

By the time 10 episodes are through, it is clear that “Master of None” is in fact, masterful. The show’s loose, inventive style makes it unlike any other show out right now. With widespread acclaim and the show ranking among Netflix’s most popular almost instantly, all that remains to be seen is how soon Ansari can deliver a second season.

Ansari deviates from the standard network-sitcom formula, creating an independently-standing story in each of the show’s 10 episodes.

WEBsurfer

By Connor Senay
INDEPENDENT EDITOR

Scholly

Scholly brings every available scholarship opportunity that might not be found otherwise into one easily navigable website. In order to save the scholarship contests that interest you, just create an account with a username and password. To help guide your search, the site will then ask you to fill out certain parameters such as gender, state, grade level, GPA, and major if you have an idea of what you want to study. The resulting list is extensive, and the monetary amounts range from \$500 to a full ride towards your college tuition. Deadlines for scholarship applications also vary, and new and exciting opportunities appear frequently: Doodle 4 Google, for example, which allows students to design their own Google logo and rewards the winner with a \$30,000 college scholarship.

Pollock

Pollock allows you to splatter paint to your heart’s content just like the famous artist Jackson Pollock. As soon as you enter the website (manetas.com/pollock), the mouse acts as a paintbrush. With every movement, it sprays a splotch of paint of varying thickness depending on how quickly you move the cursor. A slow movement makes a thicker paint splotch, and faster lines will turn out thinner. Each time you click the mouse, the paint changes color, starting with black and then randomly changing to a different color on the website’s color palate. After several minutes of experimentation, about 30 different colors of varying shades can appear with minimal repetition of colors. For a painting experience as close to real life as possible, Pollock provides the perfect creative outlet.

Fill the Silence

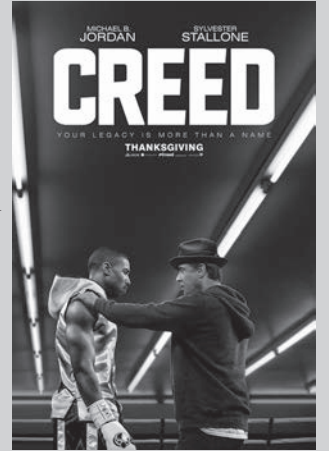
Fill the Silence is a lengthy list of short comic blurbs that, as the website describes, are “true facts for when you find yourself in the middle of an awkward pause.” Usually written with a bit of humor, the most recent one about Thanksgiving says you would have to jog for six hours straight to burn all the calories from the holiday dinner. Granted, the phrasing is essential to some of the jokes, but the facts are always useful when conversation dies down. Wasting time on this website is too easy by simply scrolling endlessly down the front page. The creator of the website, Ryan Chapman, now has his own book called “Conversation Speaks” full of random facts, some of which are not featured on the site.



What to...

Watch: Movie “Creed”

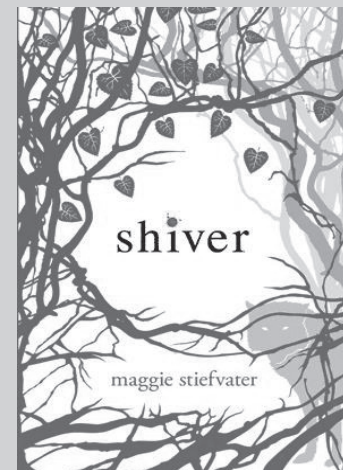
Living behind bars in a juvenile detention center and being constantly caught in the middle of bloody fist fights wasn’t exactly how Adonis Johnson pictured his life. Once released from behind bars by a loved one, the realization struck Johnson that he was the son of the world famous boxing champion, Apollo Creed. With boxing in his blood, Johnson has no other aspiration in life but to fight in the ring. Seeking out Rocky Balboa, Johnson asks the retired champion to be his trainer. With the help of Balboa, Johnson soon gets a title shot, but whether he has the true spirit and determination to fight like his father remains to be seen. “Creed” is directed by Ryan Coogler and features actors Michael Jordan, Sylvester Stallone, and Tessa Thompson. The PG-13 drama, due to violence and sexual content, has a total run time of 133 minutes.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Read: Book

“Shiver” by Maggie Stiefvater



MAGGIESTIEFVATER.COM

Maggie Stiefvater’s 2009 novel is a love story focusing on the determination and belonging of two teenagers named Grace and Sam. The 392-page book begins describing the bizarre relationship Grace has with the wolves outside her home in Minnesota and a boy named Sam who appears injured at her doorstep on a barren winter night. After being shot as a wolf, the shock turns the young boy into a human. Later crawling to Grace’s door for help, Sam is cared

for and is brought great warmth and affection. Time is short for the two, however, when Sam begins to spend more months of the year as a wolf with each passing year. Throughout the novel, Grace desperately tries to save him from permanently changing to a wolf. “Shiver” offers a wonderfully poetic fantasy of young love, keeping readers on edge for what the couple’s future holds. Stiefvater fills the novel with suspense and youthful determination that captivates interested young adult readers.

Listen To: Band

“Caracal” by Disclosure

Disclosure includes artists Guy and Howard Lawrence, siblings and dance music producers from England who gained much fame in 2010 when they uploaded early material online. The electronic music duo recently released a second studio album, “Caracal,” on September 25, 2015. The album consists of 14 songs with collaborations from many artists



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including Nao, The Weekend, Sam Smith, and Lorde. The writing process for the album was extremely collaborative, which can be seen with the long list of several notable singers. The tracks on the album have slow but up beat tempos that inspire a relaxed sound and appealing tone. Catchy lyrics and keyed-up tunes satisfy listeners. Popular songs on “Caracal” include “Omen” and “Magnets,” which feature Sam Smith and Lorde. Enticing lyrics with vivacious rhythms further highlight Disclosure’s unique music.

By Courtney Fraser, Independent Editor